1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins MS4

hands and feet in a man,—in fact, his whole appearance was arresting.

For a Bedouin, he had an unusually pale complexion, set off by a brilliantly black beard and raven locks. He preferred to dress almost entirely in black. His Arab head-cloth, sandals, and soft camel-hair cloak were black, as well as the wide shawl wound round his waist. Even his mare was black, a rare thing, for most Bedouins hold black horses in disfavour. Headstalls, halter, saddle, and saddle-cloth—all were black, relieved only by delicate silver embroidery and a few silver ornaments. His silver-hilted sword, too, was carried in a black scabbard.

Sheykh Tai' was vain. He loved arms and horses, but above all he adored his little son, Farhan. According to Ali, he had not much affection for his wives, who were reputed to be beauties; but he was proud of them as he was of all his possessions—his great herds and extensive lands.

The Tai's Bedouins kept relatively few camels, but large numbers of sheep and goat, which suffer much from the depredations of wolves in winter and spring. Sheykh Tai' told me that these nimble-footed robbers from the inaccessible retreats of the Turkish Mountains had come down again into the snow-free lowlands. They had already attacked exposed Bedouin camps and caused great damage, although the watchful herdsmen had been continually on guard.

Sheykh Tai' was, like Nimrod, a "great hunter before the Lord", and liked nothing better than to be riding abroad. On the eighth evening after our arrival, he

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins MJH

One of the documents the *sheykh* handed to me was a deed of gift and a token of his friendship; the other set forth the pedigree of the colt. Mishal rose to his feet. He took me by the hand to set me on my way, and together we walked far out into the desert. He spoke no word and I made no attempt to break the silence. My eyes were held by the picture of the powerful young stallion which was being led ahead of us by Naif and a slave. Full of fire and grace, with prancing steps, he looked the living epitome of this wild and romantic land.

When some tribesmen rode by on their mares, the young stallion stopped still, his whole body tense, neck arched, and small head held high. His chest quivered as he neighed in long-drawn silvery notes. His uplifted tail flowed out from his croup like a cascade of water. He was surely as magnificent as any of those aboriginal wild horses, which, according to Bedouin lore, Ishmael caught in the Nufud desert. "Black-skinned antelopes (*kubaylan*) they were called of old, by reason of the black rims around the eyes, which make them look as if they had been painted with *kuhl* (pure antimony)."

The *sheykh* at last called to my companions, who had gone ahead, to halt. Looking back, Mishal and I saw the great camp a long way off. The old chief laid his hands in blessing on the forehead of the young stallion, and said to me: " 'Amud,' I have named thy stallion. It is a name of my people. The peace of God be with thee forever."

Then he kissed both my cheeks and the hoof of the horse, and strode back to his tents.

I: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

342 yards of it so as to let portions of it lie on the ground: the breeze in
132 this manner percolates into every part of the tent. If the sun is very strong, a locally woven carpet (usually some shade of orange) is hung up near the tent roof between poles and is pinned to the underside of the tent roof. This doubles the thickness of the tent and brings relief.

In very cold weather, on the other hand, the tent can be closed from the front by drawing inwards the embroidered ends of the *qáta* (which already extend several yards outside the tent) and by joining the ends near the middle of the tent side. The top edge is then pinned to the edge of the roof of the tent as is done in the case of the back curtain. This encloses the tent completely and gives great cosiness and warmth to the occupants. Similarly, the ends of the *ruag* are brought right round the guest quarters and the woman's cookhouse respectively, and turn those places into warm corners to sit in.

NOTE.—The men's quarter of a tent or *raba'a* is always situated at the east end of the tent, irrespective of which way the tent is facing. This is the universal rule in Eastern and North-Eastern Arabia.

Similarly it is the rule for a tent to be pitched with its longer axis at right angles to the north-west wind (*Shamál*). In inner Najd, and especially among 'Utaiba tribe, the longer axis facing the north-west is the rule, and the tent is opened at its ends only. The *raba'a* here is at southern end.

THE TENT DOGS

231 Every tent has its watch-dogs, and also (especially amongst the 'Ajman, 'Awazim and Mutair) a *salúqi* or two. The former are fierce, shaggy animals who usually have their ears cut off short to make them good fighters. Their heads are broad, rather like our bull-terrier type, and they are fierce and very powerfully built. These dogs guard the camels and sheep at night from wolves and strangers, and are trained to move round and round the tents all night in a large circle. The incoming or departing guest usually has a busy time keeping off these savage dogs, who bark at his heels in a most disconcerting manner, and are only kept back by a continual motion of his cane behind him, or by the shouts of the occupants of the tent. The watch-dog usually
231 825 sleeps outside the women's apartments and is fed with little bits of rice, bread and dates that are left over from the meals. It is never allowed inside the tents, being unclean (*najis*). The *salúqis* (pronounced *salúqi*,

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

231 825 plural: *salag*), on the other hand, are regarded as clean, especially by the Badawin following the Maliki tenets of Islam (who are in the majority in Hasa and Kuwait), and they are allowed to enter tents and sleep in the women's portion at will. They are valued for hunting purposes, and are taught to kill hare and gazelle for the pot. Great care is taken that there shall be no interbreeding between the tent watch-dogs and the *salûqi*, and when the female *salûqi* of the household is on heat one of her hind legs is attached by a leather thong to her collar, thus forcing her to sit down, which effectually prevents a heavy dog covering her.

A STRANGER ARRIVING AT A TENT

516 A stranger arriving must approach a Badawin tent from the front only. It is the worst of bad form to come up from the back. He must then approach the guest side of the tent and halt and make his camel kneel while some way off. This shows that he wants a night's rest or some food. He must never approach or halt his camel near the women's end of the tent (*muharram*). The purpose of this custom is to give the women time to adjust their *burqas* or veils whilst the visitor is some distance off. Were the visitor to come up from behind, he might come upon an unveiled woman attending to nature or washing her hair, or cleaning kitchen utensils.

FAVOURITE SPOTS FOR PITCHING TENTS

342 In choosing a tent site the proximity of water is, of course, the first essential. Next, the nature of the grazing decides where a man will wish to pitch his tent. If he is migrating with the tribe or part of the tribe, the tent owner leaves the selection of the area to be camped on to the shaikh, but tries for the convenience of himself and his family to get as close as possible to a sandy nullah or dry water course with 342 high banks. This is very important, for it allows the whole household, 515 and especially the women, to attend to their toilet and other sanitary 514 duties out of sight and in sandy surroundings which are ideally healthful. In this connection a Badawin (male or female) never unnecessarily soils the ground, but makes a point of digging a small hole in the sand, which he afterwards fills in. If water is scarce, as more often than not

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

CHAPTER XXXIV

Locusts

Truly blessed are those countries and states which know not the Locust, nor have experienced his visitations. 731

When the word locust crops up, the average person thinks of the plagues of Egypt, and recalls vivid descriptions in the Old Testament. He pictures a mighty swarm of flying grasshoppers which settle on fruit trees, hedgerows, vegetable gardens and wheat fields, and after taking their fill, pass on. This is not an entirely false picture, but the reality is far worse. In a country like Arabia visitations are comparatively common, and one locust year is invariably followed by a second, third, and possibly a fourth. Locusts destroy not only all living bushes and available green grass, each blade of which is vital to life in a desert country like the Arabian peninsula, but cause untold hardship to townsmen and villagers. Sheep die in hundreds after a visitation because there is no more green or dry grass left for them to feed on. Though I speak with particular feeling for the Arabia I love, the locust problem is not confined to that country. Locusts annually devastate large tracts and districts of North Africa, Central and South Africa, Baluchistan, India, Persia, Iraq and Turkey.

The insect's home seems, however, to be Africa, and as far as Arabia is concerned, the general route followed by these pests in migration would seem to be from Abyssinia to Yaman in the first place. Thence the swarms apparently select one of two routes—one swarm going to Baluchistan and India via the South Arabian seaboard, and the other moving up into the Hijaz, Najd, North-Eastern tracts of Arabia, and on into Iraq and Persia. There are naturally many subsidiary migrations, but in the main as far as Arabia proper is concerned, I think—though I speak with diffidence—the theory of swarms coming over from Abyssinia and then dividing into two main streams, is fairly near the truth. This is the theory generally accepted among desert Arabs. 136 825

k Dickson G-8 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI1
Bedouins MI4

who arrived in Kuwait on 27th February reported that he had seen further large flights in South Hasa and Qatif at the end of January and early in February, also that Hufuf had had a bad visitation in January. K 731

"It was thus anticipated that March would see another invasion of Kuwait.

"Very fortunately except for the swarm mentioned above no locusts actually reached Iraq or Kuwait and the previous years' invasions were not repeated."

"On 23rd May Professor B. P. Uvarov of the South Kensington Natural History Museum, visited Kuwait to collect data regarding the previous three years' visitations, and the lines of approach of the various swarms up from S.W. Arabia to Najd and Kuwait. He prophesied that Kuwait would see no more locusts in 1932 or for another three or four years, as all evidence went to prove that they appeared in cycles of three years at a time. His prophecy came remarkably true, and between 1932 and 1935 there have been no locust visitations at all. Let us hope that 1936* will not see a reappearance."

So much for my own experience, and the damage done to town dwellers, and owners of gardens and sheep.

The Badawin proper, that is to say the great migrating camel tribes, do not mind the locusts much, in fact they rejoice in a way when they see them, for they indicate that the year is going to be a good one. Locusts, they say, only come in prosperous years. B 735 •

It does not worry these nomads if large tracts of country are denuded of fodder; they simply move off to country which has not been visited. They know that the damage done by locust swarms is more or less local, and that the insect will move to more favourable country lying to the north (Iraq) and will not bother them for long. They also enjoy the wonderful opportunity to satisfy for once in a while their ever-prevailing hunger. Nor is this all, for their horses, camels and dogs all get their fill, as well as foxes, bustard, monitor lizards, kites, shrikes and a dozen other denizens of the desert. B 731 241

I remember once, when coming home with my wife from the Bāin by car, meeting a swarm of locusts flying very low, moving across the plain west of Jahrah. It was near sunset, and we saw several

* They did not appear in 1936 or 1937.

h Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI!
Bedouins MJ4

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with details of the 'Ajman tribe west of the Dhahar ridge (22 miles from Kuwait) my wife and I saw a considerable number of birds which evidently had remained behind to nest. On 4th and 11th May we actually found sandgrouse nests on the Dhahar ridge (a stony and pebbly ridge some 30 miles long), each containing two to three eggs.

(4) The nests were found mostly on the top of wind-swept mounds (*ajnakat*) covered with sparse scrub and various coloured pebbles (*hasan*), and so were wonderfully well camouflaged, the pebbles being like the back feathers of the male and female birds. The eggs, lying in their small shallow cavities, looked exactly like the surrounding pebbles.

(5) One of these nests we saw lay in the open, another under the lee of a small bush a foot high (*'arfaj*). The nests were not lined with anything, being just a round shallow hole 3 inches across and dug in gravelly sand.

(6) One particular nest was found with eggs broken and freshly eaten, obviously by a bird of the shrike family (migrating also with sandgrouse).

B 825

According to our Badawin, if a snake sucks birds' eggs, the shells are not damaged in any way, but if a fox, monitor or other bird finds and eats them, they are invariably crushed.

K 136

(7) Other eggs which were brought to us by wandering Badawin almost daily, showed that a considerable number of birds had remained behind during migration, to nest and lay.

(8) The egg is shaped like a pigeon's egg, but is slightly larger; in colour the eggs are cream or sandy buff, with different-sized spots all over the egg. These range from dark brown to shadowy mauve. In every case when we found eggs, the mother bird appeared to be of the pintail variety. She ran off her nest as we approached to about 30 yards distance, and sat watching us. She then flew off uttering a curious cry of alarm, quite different from the ordinary sandgrouse call.

Southward Migration.—Two spotted sandgrouse were snared and brought to me on 16th September, 1934. Three others were seen flighting on 19th September, as we were bathing at Shuwaikh.

I: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MI4
Saudi Arabia MJ1

A Snake's Blood Money

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species, but they were to my mind smaller, and had no "spectacle marks" that I could see.

In colour the snakes were sandy, with faint markings all down the back.

The most noticeable feature of the snakes was the coarse-looking scales down the whole length of the body and especially the back, so typical of the Indian cobra, while the stomach was white, tending to yellow on the sides.

The eyes were gold-yellow, with darker spot in the centre. In both cases the snakes showed *anger*.

B 825

NOTE.—The Badawin with me insisted on burying the cobras where we had killed them, in two long shallow graves. They then placed seven white seashells along the length of each grave, as "blood compensation" they said, and to prevent the snake's mate trying to search us out and take vengeance. They said that white pebbles or camel droppings would be equally efficacious.

I remember coming across a very interesting specimen of a snake when my wife and I were dining one summer night (28th May, 1934) on the seashore, 12 miles south of Kuwait, with Shaikh Hamad al Mubarak. It was brought to us dead by some servants, who said it had been killed making its way toward the kitchen fire. They had crushed its head somewhat, but the body was in perfect condition. The following is a description taken from my diary:

Length 28 inches, colour sandy-yellow with dark blotches down the centre of the back, and slight blue markings above the dark ones. The head had a distinct dark marking, and at the back of the head on each side were two distinct glands about the size of a cobnut (obviously poison glands).

Although the head was slightly damaged one fang was visible. The snake was skinned and sent to the Bombay Natural History Society for identification on 31st May, 1934, by my wife, and they decided that it was a Saw-scaled Viper, (*c*) above. A feature of the snake was its "rasp"-like looking scales. They were so stiff and coarse as to resemble a file, such as is used to rasp horses' hoofs when shoeing.

On 18th December, 1934, a small snake was found in the Agency at Kuwait. It was sent to Bombay for identification, and turned out to be a non-poisonous variety called *Zamenis ventrimaculatus* (vide the Bombay Natural History Society's letter D/15th January, 1935).

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI1
Bedouins MJ4
Saudi Arabia MJ1

Appendix VII

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4. There are no difficulties to be negotiated till cars arrive at the great Dahana sand belt or barrier guarding inner Najd, as the track passes over hard gravelly country most of the way. The Dahana belt is a series of wide soft sandy ridges (eight in number) with harder going between, and has to be negotiated just before Rumah and Rumhiyah* are reached. The sand region to be crossed is approximately 40 miles broad at its narrowest point.

5. The Dahana sands are quite easily negotiated if there has been rain or a series of rainstorms, for the sand then becomes hard, and with good guides to assist a car party, several alternative routes can be taken, each of which is somewhat shorter than the track blazed by the Shaikh of Kuwait, which moved down the east side of the Dahana till the Rumah–Hufuf road was reached, and then turned sharp right (south-west by west) some miles beyond Nadhim al Kanhara.

6. If the weather is hot and there has been no rain at all the Dahana crossing presents great difficulties, and tyres have to be deflated, and progress made on second speed. A supporting car or two with spades and ropes is a necessity.

7. After crossing the Dahana, rocky country is reached and rough stones and boulders hamper cars almost as far as Buwaib Pass, which overlooks the Riyadh plain.

8. Travellers on the Kuwait–Riyadh section should have a full supply of drinking water, food, petrol and spares for an approximate 500-miles journey, as these cannot be got *en route* anywhere except at Jariya 'Ilya and Rumah, where water† only, and that of very poor quality, can be obtained.

APPENDIX VII

THE *AL SHURUF* OR "HONOURED ONES"

(THE FAMOUS BLACK HERD OF CAMELS OF THE MUTAIR TRIBE)

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From very old times the *Al Shuruf* have been the pride and glory of the great Mutair tribe of Central and North-Eastern Arabia, and consist of a very dark, almost black herd of thoroughbred camels numbering close on three hundred animals.

Among the Mutair the *Al Shuruf* or the Honoured Ones are looked upon as a sort of "sacred emblem", or standard, for the tribe to follow

* Rumhiyah is left some miles to the west by those taking the latest and shortest car route.

† In the winter, if rains have been good in the Summán area, water can be obtained from various *dibals* or water-holes *en route*. But this is an unreliable source of supply.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Appendix VII

in war or peace, and are at all times guarded with the greatest care and have their own special herdsmen.

The *Shuruf* can best be compared to the famous *Markab* or "Ark of Ishmael" which goes before the Rawala host when the latter tribe migrates to new regions or marches to war, and which is really nothing but a glorified ladies' camel litter, decked all over with black ostrich feathers (see under chapter dealing with the Tent and its treasures), but held in the deepest reverence by every single man and woman of the tribe.

As in the case of the *Markab*, the *Shuruf* is the rallying point of the tribe if attacked or in difficulties. The herd must be defended at all costs, and the tribe will cheerfully lose all its other camels in a battle or raid provided the *Shuruf* are safe.

In the attack, and especially if such be in the nature of a forlorn hope, the *Shuruf* have the place of honour always and lead the van. No Mutairi ever rides them, and they just move forward in a compact well-trained black mass ahead of the fighting men as if perfectly understanding the game. The latter will follow straight on to victory or death in their wake. The *Shuruf* seem also to know that they afford a sort of moving wall of protection for the footmen in their rear, and never scatter.

In peace time the famous black herd always grazes alone and under specially selected guards, always too as far from the common gaze as possible. It is said that should other strange camels get mixed up with them, the black herd will attack them and drive them out. Nor are the cows of the herd allowed to breed except from their own males.

To-day the *Al Shuruf* are in the hands of the great 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud —King and Lord of Arabia. They were taken away from the Mutair as the most severe punishment that could be meted out to them after Faisal al Duwish's rebellion of 1929–30, and are to-day (1939) most carefully guarded and looked after for the King by the faithful Shaikh Faisal bin Shiblan, head of the Jiblan sept of the great Mutair. Actually the King handed the *Shuruf* over to his brother Muhammad al Sa'ud for safe keeping after the above-mentioned rebellion, but this was a mere formality, for H.M. King 'Abdul 'Aziz' brand adorns the rear off hind quarter of each camel like this, $\circ|\circ$, and the herd remains the King's property, much as in the occident any war flags captured from an enemy are handed over to the King.

As far as I am aware, my wife and I are the only Europeans living who have had the opportunity of setting eyes on this jealously guarded herd and semi-sacred tribal emblem of the Mutair. This was on 7th April and 14th April, 1939, when, by special invitation of His Highness the Shaikh of Kuwait, King Bin Sa'ud sent his private camels numbering seventy-five *Raiyah* or herds, together with the *Shuruf* (some 4,500 all told) into the Araifjan and Shu'aiba districts of Kuwait to graze, the act being a gracious appreciation on the part of Shaikh Ahmad for Bin Sa'ud's good will and

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Appendix VII

825 233 moral assistance rendered at a time when Kuwait was threatened with rebellion and disorder due to the efforts of certain of the Shaikh's enemies to hand over the State to the neighbouring Government of Iraq, and bring about the downfall of the house of Al Subah (autumn and spring of 1938–39).

On the 7th April my wife and I, hearing that the *Shuruf* were grazing at the southern end of the Dhahar ridge and close to Grain wells, made a surreptitious car dash accompanied by Salim al Muzaiyin (Mutairi), and came up with the famous herd shortly before sunset as they were breasting the top of a small rise, on their way to Ibn Shiblan's black tents, on the approach of nightfall. They presented a strikingly pretty sight silhouetted against the setting sun. They marched in a fairly close group, heading the remainder of the King's camels by half a mile or so. No one was about except a herdsman, who told us blandly in reply to our query that the *Al Shuruf* were a day's journey away—nor did any of the guards see us, being as they were on the other side of the rise beating up the stragglers. Being right amidst the herd we got a perfect look at the beautiful black beasts, and recognised the well-known brands of the Al Sa'ud and of the Dushan on them. Having seen what we wanted to see we slipped off north again unnoticed.

On 13th April we arrived at Salim al Muzaiyin's camp near Shu'aiba, intending to spend the night and next day. We had invited five of the Al Subah Shaikhs to dinner. On arrival Salim our man told us that the King's camels were grazing all round him, and that the *Al Shuruf*, which had spent the previous night close to his tents, were grazing over the nearby rise. Lastly, he said that Shaikh Misyar al Shiblan, who was in immediate charge, was waiting in his tent to pay his respects to us. Misyar was rather a wild Jibli, but we gave him dinner that night, and accommodated him in Salim's tent. Determined to see our beautiful black herd of camels once again, we rose early on the 14th April and drove in our car with Salim for about one mile. There in a hollow beneath us we saw the *Shuruf* once again. We had told nobody of our intention, and so as not to attract notice we got out of our car and started walking towards the herd.

I may mention in passing that the surrounding country seemed alive with thousands of other camels, these being the King's herds as well as those of the Shaikh of Kuwait under Al Shaiyah al Jibli.

When still about half a mile from the nearest black camel we heard shouts from an armed man who was fast bearing down on us on a riding camel: we waited for him, and he asked us what we wanted. We replied that we had come to see the *Shuruf*. "They are not here, they are not here," he said, "but away back at Araifjan." He was joined by three other armed men, and lastly by Shaikh Misyar himself, who appeared from nowhere. The latter, when confronted with our request, admitted that the famous black herd was in front of us, but said that he had the strictest orders from King Bin Sa'ud his master to allow no one to approach, much less

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI
Bedouins MJ4

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take any photographs. We argued that we were the personal friends of His Majesty and that we felt sure he would feel honoured at the interest we were showing. We also promised not to take any photographs, or even tell a soul that we had seen the *Shuruf* (we, of course, said nothing of the incident of the 7th April).

But Shaikh Misyar was politely adamant, saying that he dared not break the King's commands, even though I had dined him the previous night, and had once saved his Uncle Faisal bin Shiblan's life. However, so as not to hurt my feelings too much, Shaikh Misyar ordered three of the guards to go to the herd and bring back a bowl of milk for my wife and myself. No sooner said than done. We saw one of the famous herd milked, though some way off, and we partook of the wonderful frothy bowl with great relish.

At least we can say that we have drunk the milk of the far-famed *Al Shuruf*. Nor shall we forget the incident or the great honour done to us in the eyes of the Mutair.

APPENDIX VIII

INSECTS OF KUWAIT

By B. P. Uvarov, D.Sc.
British Museum (Natural History)

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The territories of Kuwait and, indeed, of the whole Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf, are practically unexplored with regard to the insect fauna, and on it there exist only a few scattered records. It was, therefore, of great scientific interest for collections made there by Mrs. H. R. P. Dickson and Miss Zahra Dickson to be worked out by the specialists. The following list is based on the determinations made mostly by Mr. G. E. Bryant, of the Imperial Institute of Entomology, and by myself. All the specimens were most generously presented by the collectors to the British Museum (Natural History) and placed in its collections.

It will be seen that when collecting insects special attention was paid to Orthoptera, following my special request, and the results can be considered most gratifying. Indeed, a number of species has been found that had not been previously known from anywhere in the Arabian peninsula, and a new species was discovered, representing a remarkable new genus. It was even more interesting to obtain a long list of species definitely known to occur on the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf, and some of these records are of special value in extending the known range of specific distribution.